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JULY 29, 2012

health

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being
stalked?



Shahid Kapoor,
a recent victim of
stalking

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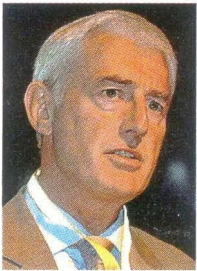
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Picture research Bimal Nath C.

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Sujesh K., Sumesh C.N.

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PRICE OF FAME? Cricketer M.S. Dhoni was a victim of stalking

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SHADOW PLAY

What binds Vidya Balan, Shahid Kapoor, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Britney Spears? They have all had to call the cops to drive away their stalkers. But it is not just celebrities who are followed. Even common people complain of being stalked. And more than a social menace, stalking is a medical condition that needs psychiatric help, say experts

Plus

World's first clinic that provides psychiatric counselling to stalkers

The five types of stalkers

Some celebrities who have had to deal with stalkers

PRIZE WINNING LETTER

BROTHERS IN ARMS

My husband, who was in the Army, told me an extremely poignant story on blood donation. The 1971 war had just ended, and local Bangladeshi hospitals were full of wounded soldiers, including those of the Indian Army, and Pakistani prisoners-of-war (PoWs). My husband had donated blood at one of these hospitals and was resting, when a young officer of the Indian Army came in. He offered to donate blood, but only on the condition that it would not be given to a Pakistani PoW. Hearing this, a senior officer admonished him. "Young man, these PoWs were your enemies while the war was on," he said. "Today, they are just wounded human beings. Never forget that a soldier fighting for the honour of his motherland deserves respect no matter which side he is on."

RAJESHWARI SINGH,
New Delhi.



in their stride is alarming. It is time the health ministry woke up to the realities and worked out a strategy for combating mental illness by treating the patients with dignity while taking sufficient care at every stage depending upon the response. Otherwise the country will be further handicapped with more numbers getting added due to poor and fewer facilities available to such patients.

K.R. SRINIVASAN,
Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Feeling the pinch

'Costly crab' (July 1) hit me really hard. For years, thousands of cancer patients have died because drugs are unaffordable. But these were just statistics for me. Recently, my sister was diagnosed with lymphoma and our middle-class family is reeling under the

psychological and financial strain.

Chemo cycles, along with the in-between scans and tests cost a bomb and it is hard for the patient's family to decide when to let go. Is it when they are completely ruined financially or when there is no hope of the patient's survival? I wish pharma companies or oncologists or counsellors had an answer.

I respect the patient's decision not to use funds meant for the children's education and her husband's support for old age. But, how often is the choice given to the parents with full facts?

Oncologists smugly say, we do not use the word cure in cancer, we only say response. Of course, they are not God but a little more clarity and discussion with the family would be welcome.

SARITA BERY,
Bangalore.

WRITE TO US!

Have you been touched by an article in HEALTH? Do you have a story or experience to share? What more would you like to see on the pages? Please write to us. The best letter of each issue wins THE WEEK leather backpack. You can mail us at editor@the-week.com or post your letter to The Week, Manorama Buildings, P.B. No. 4278, Kochi - 682036, Kerala, India.

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Baby trap

The June 10 issue of Health had a beautiful cover with the line 'Mom, Dad & Surrogate Baby'. The article stresses on the goodness of surrogacy, forgetting the complications that may affect the surrogate mother and the surrogate baby.

In reality, things are not as hunky dory as put forward in the magazine. Surrogate mothers are usually from the poorer sections of society with only one idea in mind—to make the money they need. Being soft targets, they can be exploited easily, which is why so many agencies have jumped on to the band wagon of surrogacy to strike gold while the going is good! It is hardly surprising that the death of a surrogate mother Pamela Vaghela, who died during a routine check up after the delivery of a surrogate

baby hardly created ripples for she was a poor woman.

Laws must be strictly implemented to regulate surrogacy.

SUMAN G. PAI,

On email.

Problem of too much

With reference to 'Sunshine vitamin' (May 6), I would like to recount my personal experience on the effects of excess levels of vitamin D.

I was advised to take vitamin D3 injection twice a week for severe joint pain. This was advised to be continued as there was considerable relief from symptoms. As a result I took around 80 such injections.

Later, I was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease stage 3, which was attributed to excessive

levels of calcium, the absorption of which is catalysed by vitamin D3. My calcium level had shot up to 15. Two years hence I am still suffering from the ill effects of excess vitamin D3 and I am advised against taking any anti-inflammatory drugs life-long as it will further worsen the permanent damage to my kidneys.

I have also been advised to drink more than four litres of water daily.

I was treated at the Christian Medical College, Vellore. One of the nephrologists there later informed me that one more such case was reported a few months later.

I, therefore, request you to publish an article on the effects of excess levels of vitamin D3 so that such incidents do not recur.

SUJATHA V.K.,

On email.

LETTERS

IN FOCUS

Worried about delay in Pregnancy?

Did you know that a woman's chances of pregnancy are just 2 days in a month? Yes, you read that correctly!

A woman can conceive only around the time of ovulation; a small window of opportunity each month during which the egg is viable, or open for fertilization. In today's fast paced life, planning a baby has become more important than just attempting for one. When both partners are working and there is a high level of stress and exhaustion, proper co-ordination and planning at the right time bears fruit. Knowing when those 2 days in a month can help reduce a woman's anguish and frustration due to delayed pregnancy. It will help reduce the waiting period for her to welcome her pregnancy.

What is ovulation? Ovulation is the process when 1 single egg is released inside a woman's body each month. This egg survives in her body for 12-24 hours only. If the egg is fertilized in these 12-24 hours, the woman gets pregnant, else the egg gets dissolved and expelled in the next menstrual cycle.

When does Ovulation occur? Ovulation most often occurs sometime in the through the menstrual cycle, the average cycle lasts 28 days, counting from the first day of one period (day one) to the first day of the next period.

But the range can vary anywhere from 23 to 35 days, and the cycle may also actually vary slightly from month to month and from woman to woman. By keeping a menstrual calendar for a few months, you can get an idea of what is your normal cycle length

The product i-sure is an ovulation detection kit that helps know when those 2 days will begin, 12-24 hours in advance. During ovulation, along with the egg, a hormone called the Luteinizing Hormone (LH) is also released in a woman's body. This LH gets passed out from urine. i-sure detects presence of LH in urine to inform when a woman is ovulating, 12-24 hours in advance. Intercourse during this period can significantly increase her chances of getting pregnant.

i-sure is very useful if you really want to plan for a baby at the right time and reduce the wait period.

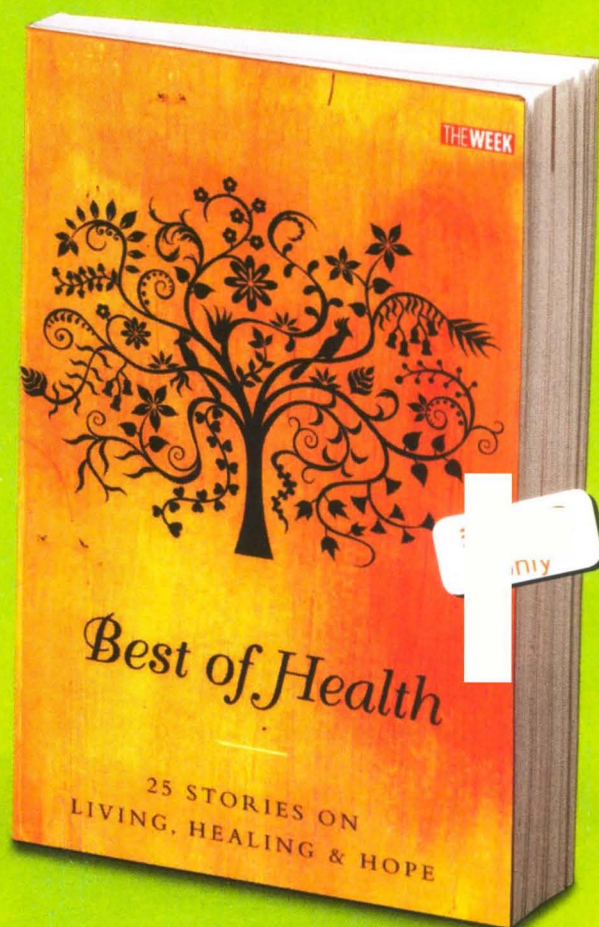
No matter what or how you choose, patience and persistence is the key! Just don't forget to plan a romantic weekend getaway or whatever it is that puts both of you in a baby-making mood. It will help you in the long run minus the apprehensions.



Best of Health

So that you
have the best of health

THE WEEK brings out a collection of 25 stories published in the HEALTH supplement. From pain to hope and addiction to phobia - stories that inspire in a 260-page volume.



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TO STOP SHAKING

The Austrian company AFFiRiS AG of Vienna has begun the first-ever clinical trial of a vaccine to treat Parkinson's disease.

The phase I trial involves 32 patients. Called PD01A, the vaccine is directed against Synuclein, a protein that is thought to be responsible for causing the disease.

The vaccine is expected to slow down the progression of the disease by reducing concentrations of the protein. PD01A is designed to stimulate the production of antibodies against alpha-Synuclein without affecting closely related proteins.

Current treatments for Parkinson's address only the symptoms; if successful, this could be the first treatment to control disease progression.

MINDFUL AND POSITIVE

Practising "mindfulness meditation", also called "integrative body-mind training", that involves periods of intense focus and concentration is not just relaxing; it actually causes positive changes in the brain.

The study in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* was based on 68 students in China who were randomly assigned to either a meditation or a relaxation-training group. None of the students had any experience with meditation.

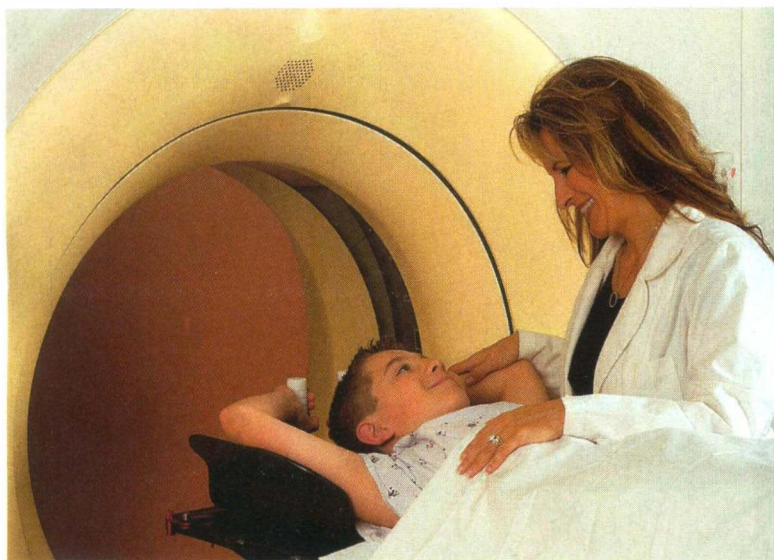
Using diffusion tensor imaging, a kind of MRI technique, the researchers assessed changes in the structure of the brain. There were substantial changes in the white matter of the brain involving the anterior cingulate cortex, a part of the brain network related to self-regulation.

Many mental disorders such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and borderline personality disorder involve the anterior cingulate cortex. A better understanding of the white matter in the brain "could provide a means for intervention to improve or prevent mental disorders".

DID YOU KNOW

People are drawn to junk food and eat more when they don't get adequate sleep: SLEEP 2012 Conference





SCAN RISK

Having multiple CT (computed tomography) scans in childhood can triple the risk of developing brain cancer and leukaemia.

For the study in the journal *The Lancet*, British researchers studied almost 1,80,000 cancer-free children under age 22 who had at least one CT scan between 1985 and 2002.

They assessed the number and types of CT scans and the dose of radiation absorbed in each scan and compared the data to cancer incidence and mortality during the study period.

Children who had two to three CT scans had triple the risk of developing brain tumours and those who had five to 10 scans were three times more likely to develop leukaemia.

While the absolute risk of a cancer diagnosis is small and a CT scan is an important diagnostic tool, doctors should try to keep radiation doses from CT scans as low as possible and opt for alternative diagnostic procedures, such as ultrasound and MRI, that do not involve ionising radiation, when possible.

DID YOU KNOW

Taking the daily recommendation of 600 micrograms or more of folic acid per day in the first month of pregnancy was tied to a 38 per cent reduced risk of having a kid with autism or Asperger's: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition

PETS AGAINST PESTS

Babies who are around dogs during their first twelve months of life are less likely to suffer from respiratory and ear infections, according to Finnish researchers in the journal *Pediatrics*. Cats also provided some protection, but the effect was weaker than of dogs.

The research was based on 397 children who were followed from birth for a year. Babies who had dogs at home were 44 per cent less likely to develop ear infections and 29 per cent less likely to need antibiotics than pet-free babies.

Previous research has shown that kids with pets around have a lower risk of allergies. Children who lived in households where dogs spent more time outside were the healthiest. Such dogs bring more dirt and bacteria inside the home and early exposure builds up babies' immune systems.





FEEL FULL WITH A PILL

Arena Pharmaceuticals has won approval for its new prescription diet drug lorcaserin from the US Food and Drug Administration. Lorcaserin is the first diet pill to win the FDA's approval since 1999.

The medication is intended for people with a body mass index greater than 30 or for those with a BMI of 27 or above with at least one weight-related health condition such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

The drug works by activating the serotonin 2C receptor that may help a person eat less by triggering feelings of satiety.

In the clinical trial, about 47 per cent of patients without type 2 diabetes lost at least 5 per cent of their body weight and 38 per cent of patients with type 2 diabetes lost at least 5 per cent of their body weight after taking the drug together with diet and exercise.

Patients who fail to lose 5 per cent of their body weight after 12 weeks of treatment should discontinue usage. The drug should not be used during pregnancy.

The most common side effects include headache, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, dry mouth and constipation. Diabetic patients may experience low blood sugar, headache, back pain, cough and fatigue.



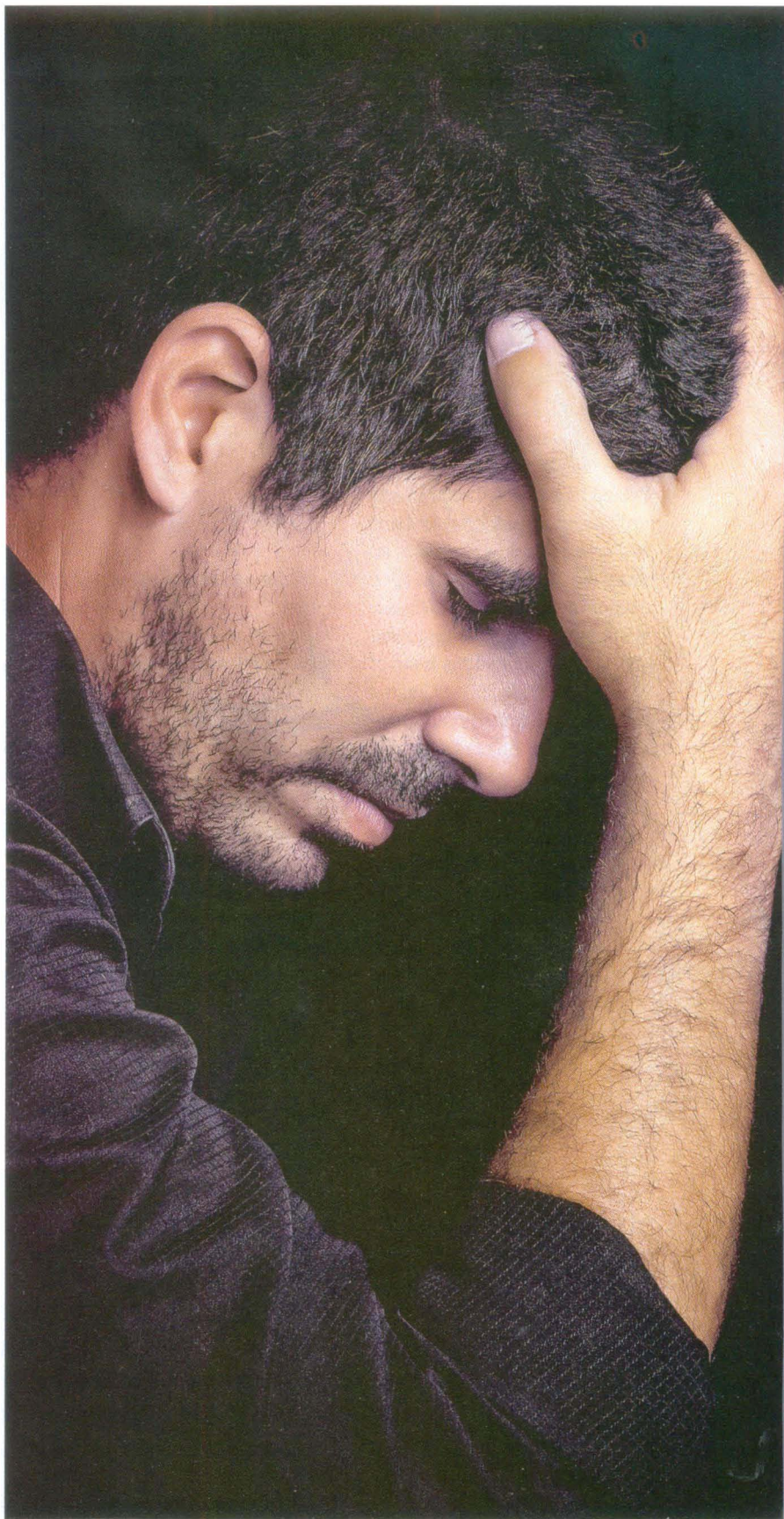
TAX TO SAVE LIVES

Adding a few rupees as taxes to air tickets can help generate the much needed funds to buy life-saving medicines for diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

UNITAID, a UN agency which negotiates to buy cheap medicines from pharmaceutical companies to treat deadly diseases in developing countries, is urging India to join countries such as France, Brazil, Chile and South Korea in imposing a nominal air ticket tax to fund its efforts.

The initiative which generates about \$200 million annually is proposing a tax of ₹10 on domestic tickets and \$1 on international flights in the Indian market.

With a booming air passenger market, India can make a big difference if it joins the initiative. Since 80 per cent of the drugs bought by UNITAID are from Indian pharmaceutical companies and some of them are used to treat Indian patients, India has nothing to lose by joining the programme.



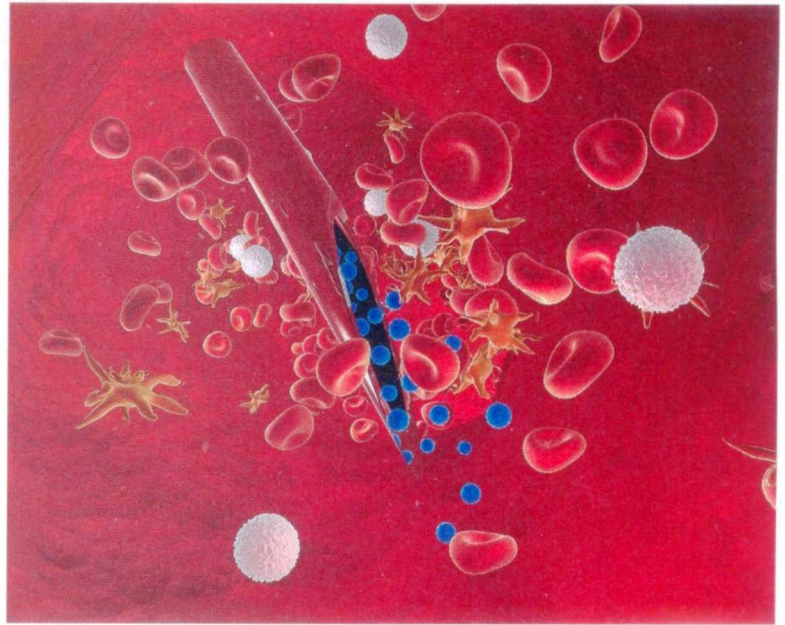
TRAUMA OF ATTACK

The physical turmoil of a heart attack is well established, but the emotional toll is often overlooked. An analysis of 24 studies involving 2,383 heart attack survivors has found that nearly one in eight people who survive a heart attack will go on to develop symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PTSD in turn doubled the risk of having a second heart attack or dying from the event within the next three years. According to the findings in the journal *PLoS ONE*, 12 per cent of the participants developed clinically significant heart attack-induced PTSD symptoms.

The severity of the attack did not affect a patient's risk of developing PTSD, but young patients who had a heart event were at a greater risk.

Symptoms of the disorder include frequent nightmares, intrusive thoughts, sleep problems, anxiety and elevated blood pressure or heart rate.



A SHOT OF OXYGEN

Researchers at Boston Children's Hospital have designed tiny, gas-filled microparticles that can be injected directly into the bloodstream of patients who have stopped breathing due to an obstruction in their airway or acute lung failure.

Oxygen deprivation can lead to cardiac arrest or serious brain injury. The new method reported in the journal *Science Translational Medicine* can bypass the lungs and deliver oxygen in liquid form.

The microparticles consist of a single layer of lipids or fatty molecules that surround a tiny pocket of oxygen gas. In animal studies, these microparticles restored blood oxygen saturation to near normal levels within seconds and kept the animals alive for 15 minutes without a single breath.

The microparticles can be used as an oxygen substitute only for 15 to 30 minutes because they could overload the blood if used for longer periods.

These could eventually be stored in syringes in hospitals, ambulances or transport helicopters to help stabilise patients in emergency situations.

DID YOU KNOW

The bigger your waist, the greater your risk for type 2 diabetes, especially if you are a woman: PLoS Medicine

CURE BEFORE BIRTH

In a pioneering procedure, the surgical team led by world-renowned foetal surgeon Ruben Quintero of the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial, have successfully removed a tumour from the mouth of a foetus, reports the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*. The surgery was performed in 2010 after a routine scan on Tammy Gonzalez at 17 weeks showed “a bubble” coming out of her baby’s mouth. The baby had a very rare tumour called an oral teratoma with little chance of survival.

The surgery was done under local anaesthesia using an endoscope guided by ultrasound. A laser was used to cut the tumour from the baby’s lips. The operation lasted just over an hour.

Baby Leyna Mykaella Gonzalez was born in October 2010. A tiny scar on the mouth of this healthy 20-month-old child is the only sign of her surgery.



LATER THE BETTER

Two separate studies have found that early menopause may not be good for the heart and brain. For the first study published in the journal *Menopause*, researchers followed 2,509 ethnically diverse women for nearly five years. Women who went through menopause before age 46 were twice as likely to have a heart attack or stroke as women who hit menopause later. While the reason for the link is not

clear, researchers speculate that reduced oestrogen production after menopause could be a possibility. But supplementing the hormones is not an answer either, because studies have shown that hormone replacement therapy may increase the risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

It could also “be a genetic association, [where] genes that are related to ovarian function may also be associated with cardiovascular disease, and those two things are

related but not through a common causal pathway”.

The second study published in the *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery* found that the younger a woman is at menopause, the greater is her risk of having a brain aneurysm, which can be fatal on rupture and lead to stroke or death.

Each four-year increase in the age at which a woman went through menopause reduced the risk of aneurysm by 21 per cent.



LABOUR OF FEAR

A Norwegian study published in the journal *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* has found that women who fear childbirth tend to have longer labour.

At 32 weeks, 2,206 pregnant women took a standard questionnaire that assessed their fear of childbirth. Women who were afraid of childbirth spent an hour and 32 minutes longer in labour than women who were not.

Women who feared childbirth were also more likely to need emergency caesarean delivery (10.9 per cent versus 6.8 per cent) or instrumental vaginal delivery (17 per cent versus 10.6 per cent).

About a quarter of women who were scared of childbirth delivered vaginally without any aid from obstetric interventions compared to 44.4 per cent of women who weren't afraid.

LOSING TO HIV

Children who are exposed to HIV in the womb are more likely to suffer hearing loss by age 16, according to a study published in *The Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal*.

The study included 231 kids aged 7 to 16 years, who had been exposed to HIV in the womb. About 60 per cent of the children were HIV-positive. Compared to other children their age, children with HIV infection were about 200 to 300 per cent more likely to suffer hearing loss. Children who themselves were HIV free, but whose mothers had HIV during pregnancy were 20 per cent more likely to have hearing loss.

Children with HIV are prone to middle ear infections which in turn can cause hearing loss. But most of the hearing loss in the study was the result of problems with the transmission of sound from the nerves of the ear to the brain, rather than damage in the middle ear caused by ear infections.



EXHAUSTING FUMES

Exhaust fumes from diesel engines definitely cause lung cancer, according to the World Health Organisation. It can also contribute to tumours in the bladder.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a part of the World Health Organisation, had previously labelled diesel exhausts as probably carcinogenic to humans.

But the new announcement puts diesel exhaust fumes in the same category as other Group 1 carcinogens such as tobacco, asbestos, ultraviolet radiation, arsenic, alcohol and mustard gas.

An earlier study had found that nonsmoking miners who were heavily exposed to diesel fumes had seven times greater risk of lung cancer as other nonsmokers. The agency is urging governments to take necessary steps to limit exposure by setting up environmental standards for diesel exhaust emissions.

BOOSTER FOR BIG BOYS

Immunisations don't stop with diapers. Even adults need new vaccinations or booster shots to stay healthy.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends specific immunisations depending on your age, lifestyle, high-risk conditions, type and locations of travel, and previous immunisations.

Suggested vaccinations include:

- Seasonal influenza (flu) vaccine every year
 - Pneumococcal disease for adults 65 years and older and adults with specific health conditions such as chronic lung disease or immunosuppression
 - Tetanus, diphtheria (Td) booster shots are needed at 10-year intervals throughout a person's life
 - Shingles for adults 60 years and older
 - Hepatitis B for adults who have diabetes or are at risk for the infection
- Other vaccinations to be considered include:
- hepatitis A for adults who have chronic liver disease, are injection drug users, or are men who have sex with men
 - measles, mumps and rubella for anyone born since 1956 and all women of childbearing age who have not had the diseases or been vaccinated
 - chickenpox (varicella) for anyone who has not had this disease and has not been vaccinated

For more information, visit adultvaccination.org



WEEKLY AS GOOD AS DAILY

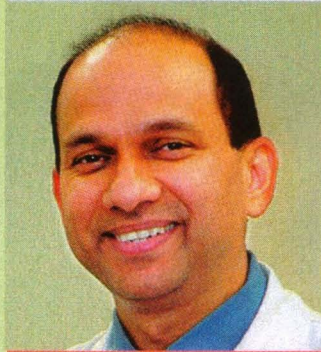
A review of previous studies published in *The Cochrane Library* has concluded that long-lasting weekly injections of fertility hormones are as safe and effective as standard daily injections.

Women undergoing in vitro fertilisation need follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) injections to stimulate the ovaries to grow and release multiple eggs that are removed and fertilised outside the body before being re-implanted in the uterus. But a comparison study of daily and weekly hormone injections involving 2,335 women reveals that weekly shots can safely replace the first seven days of FSH injections required in the standard regimen.

Women who took medium doses of the weekly injections were just as likely to become pregnant and did not have a higher risk of having twins or complications such as miscarriages, ectopic pregnancy or swollen ovaries as those who received daily FSH injections.

Contributor:
SHYLA JOVITHA ABRAHAM

Q & A



DR JAME ABRAHAM, MD, FACP, is Bonnie Wells Wilson Distinguished Professor, chief of oncology and medical director of Mary Babb Randolph Cancer Center, West Virginia University, USA. jameabraham@hotmail.com

ASK EXPERT: ONCOLOGY

Kharbanda: I am 78 years old. I have been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia. Doctors have ruled out aggressive chemotherapy because of my age. They are contemplating low potency chemotherapy but they are not sure of its effectiveness. I am also not too keen. One of the patients suffering from AML had written to you that he was using 400mg of imatinib pills and there was complete remission in his case. He wanted your advice for further use. As per the reply he was required to use the same medicine after blood checks. Will the same pills or other medicine be useful in my case?

I fully agree with you that we need to be careful before starting aggressive chemotherapy, which could cause many side effects and has marginal benefit. Imatinib is a treatment for Philadelphia positive chronic myeloid leukaemia (CML) and acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL). What you have is acute myeloid leukaemia (AML), which is more common in adults. So I don't think imatinib will be effective for you. As you mentioned, it is important to consider the risk and benefit before you consider any therapy. In general most of the treatments are not curative. So please talk to your doctor.

years ago. The doctor felt that because of my age and the nature of the cancer, it would be best to just wait and watch. I see the oncologist and undergo PET scan every six months and two months ago, I saw the doctor and he did not order a PET scan and told me to come back in six months. I have been having a great deal of discomfort in the site where the lumps first appeared (in the neck under the right ear). That side of my face feels full and heavy. At my age, is radiation still possible if it should appear that this is the NHL acting up?

There are many different types of lymphoma. Some of them are very aggressive and some of the lymphomas are very slow growing. Looks like what you have is a slow-growing, low-grade lymphoma. Low-grade lymphoma, such as follicular lymphoma or CLL, could be treated very well by waiting and watching.

Unfortunately, low-grade lymphoma is not completely curable. In general the treatment for lymphoma is chemotherapy with or without a targeted medicine rituximab. So unless you are symptomatic, it is better to avoid aggressive chemotherapy or rituximab. If you are symptomatic, you could consider radiation or rituximab (if the cells are CD20 positive). Good luck with your treatment. You will do fine with any of these approaches. ●

Bharat: My father was diagnosed with adenocarcinoma of the rectum two years ago. He underwent multiple cycles of chemotherapy and radiation. He has been operated upon twice—colostomy followed by laser excision of tumour mass. Chemotherapy and all other medicines have been stopped since he is not capable of taking them. Now he complains of severe pain in the left leg from the hip joint radiating towards the toe. Bone scan shows no positive finding. What could be causing the pain?

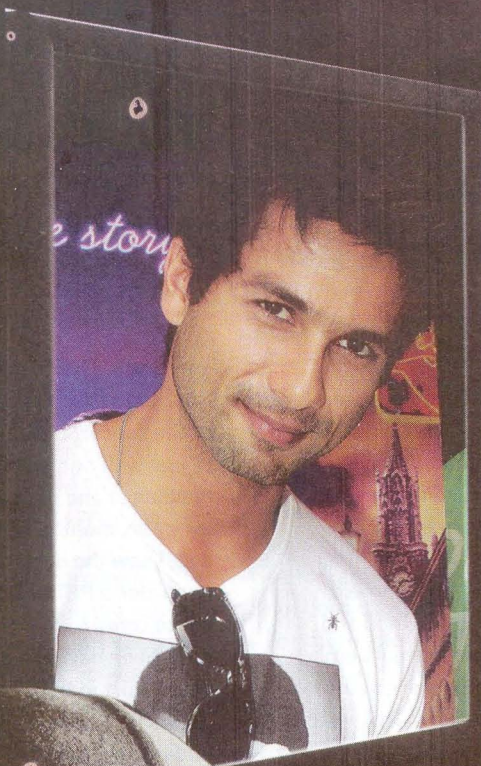
From your description, I understand that your father has a metastatic rectal cancer (which means the

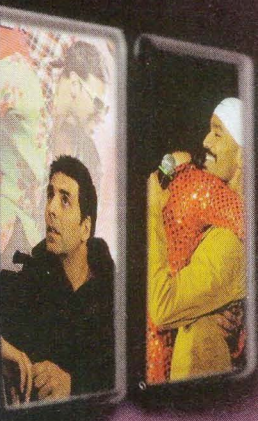
cancer has already spread) and also he has a tough time taking the treatment.

The reason for his leg pain could be neuropathy (nerve damage) from chemotherapy, or bone/involvement of the spine with cancer. If he has pain in the hip which is radiating to the legs, it is reasonable to do an MRI or CT scan of the spine and hip. That will rule out cancer involvement of these areas. If cancer is causing pain, then the doctors could consider radiation treatment to control the pain.

Marks: I am 92 years old and was diagnosed with NHL about four

COVERSTORY



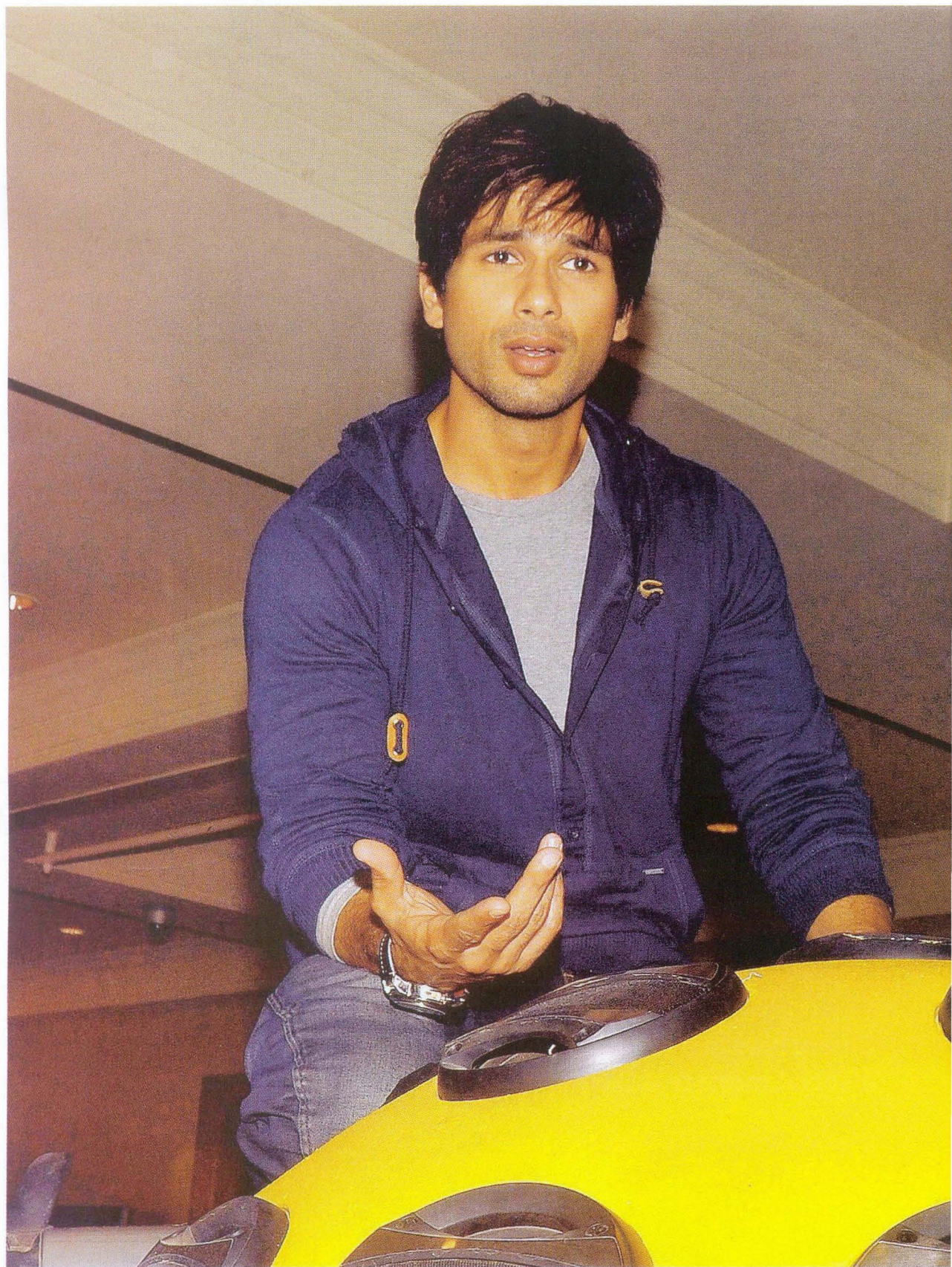


STRANGER IN THE SHADOWS

Celebrities are followed, so are many of us. More than a social menace, stalking is a psychiatric problem

BY SRABANTI CHAKRABORTHY

COVERSTORY





It all starts with an innocuous liking, which slowly develops into an obsession and finally leads to nothing less than a serious psychiatric problem. Often, the person becomes violent and, on rejection, might try to kill the person they desire. Stalking, which was once considered just a menace, is now being treated in a different light by medical experts.

Be it singer Britney Spears's Japanese stalker who sent her sex toys, or Michael Douglas's fan who sent threat mails to the actor's wife Catherine Zeta-Jones, most of the stalking incidents in the west were resolved through legal action and psychiatric help.

It seems India is no stranger to celeb stalkers either. Recently, Shahid Kapoor hit the headlines when he reported that he was being stalked by Vastavikta, daughter of yesteryear superstar Raj Kumar. She reportedly stalked him everywhere and even moved to a house close to Shahid's. She would wait outside his house every day and told people she was married to Shahid.

Apparently, the two knew each

other since Shahid's days at Shia-mak Davar's dancing school where both attended dancing lessons; Vastavikta had developed a liking for the actor then. Shahid had to call in the cops when Vastavikta tried to enter his apartment by climbing the boundary wall after she was refused entry by the security. Vastavikta, who had debuted in the Karan Razdaan film *Eight*, had stalked Shahid for almost a year.

But why would a girl from a respectable family, who has seen the glamour world, do such a thing? "Stalking has always existed, but it is being talked about more now," says Mumbai-based psychiatrist Dr Harish Shetty. "In a globalised world where acquaintances are mistaken to be friends and friends to be lovers, there is emotional chaos. This chaos leads to one-sided love and obsession, ultimately leading to stalking."

Akshay Kumar also faced a similar situation during the release of his film *Kambhaqt Ishq*. A girl used to wait in front of his house every day to meet him. Finally when they met, she said she wanted to marry him. Despite Akshay's explanation that

Shahid Kapoor was stalked almost for a year by Vastavikta, daughter of yesteryear superstar Raj Kumar. She moved to a house close to Shahid's and told people she was married to the actor.



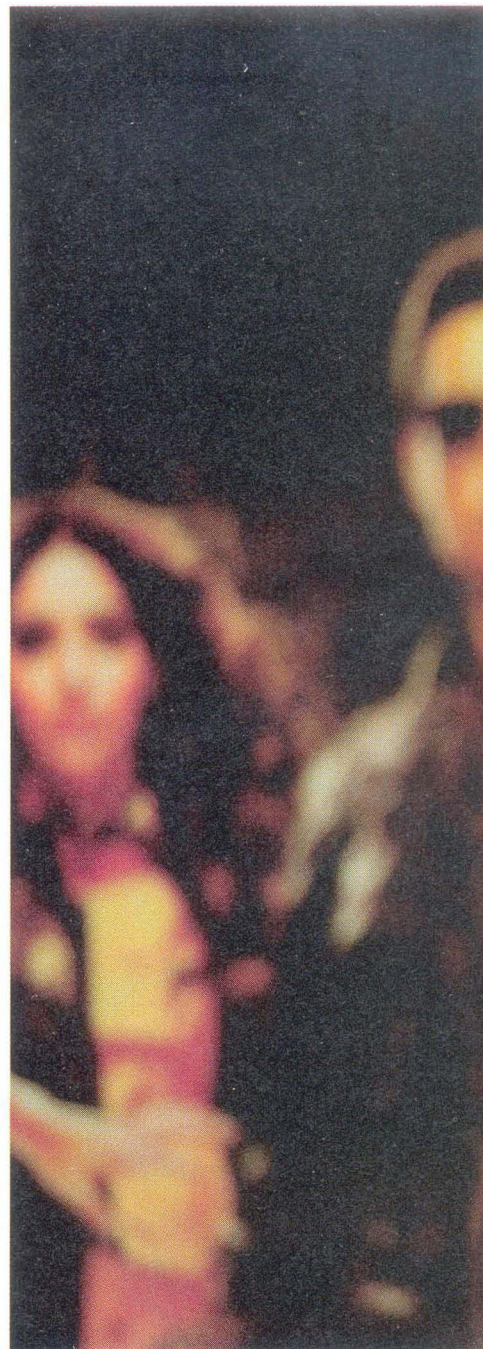
AP

he was married, the girl refused to budge. Only after a lot of hue and cry did she finally move.

One of Sonu Nigam's fans also camped outside his house with the intent of marrying him. Despite Sonu and his wife personally meeting her, the fan refused to make a move till the cops came. Says Shetty: "The loneliness of the anonymity-filled world accelerates this phenomenon. Stalking is akin to the want to own, steal or snatch the object of desire. It is like mine or no one else's."

Remember Jahnvi Kapoor? The girl, who slashed her wrists in front of Abhishek Bachchan's house, claimed the actor was her lover. Since he was not marrying her, she reasoned, she was committing suicide. She had to be dragged away by the cops and given medical attention; it took 40 stitches to close her wounds. She was later arrested for the suicide bid.

Mahendra Singh Dhoni was hugged and kissed by a female fan in Kolkata a few years ago. The woman had travelled 250km



to meet the cricket superstar. An embarrassed Dhoni did not know how to react and only after the police intervened did the woman leave. She said it was the most memorable moment of her life.

Most sociologists and psychiatrists don't think stalking can be avoided. Shetty explains: "One cannot eradicate stalking. But



AFP

such people need immediate help from a counsellor. It has been seen that those who stalk typically have low self-esteem, suffer from depression or other mental illness. Efforts should be made by all concerned to get the person to a counsellor.”

The case of Mark David Chapman, the stalker-turned-killer

Jahnvi Kapoor (left), slashed her wrists in front of Abhishek Bachchan's house, claiming the actor was her lover. Since he was not marrying her, she reasoned, she was committing suicide.

HUNT AND PECK

Psychiatrists group stalkers into five types

Intimacy seeker

In love with their victim and trying to begin a relationship, while remaining oblivious or indifferent to the victim's lack of interest. Perpetrators are often psychotic.

Rejected

A former partner, family member or friend claiming to seek reconciliation, but is prone to violence. The stalking can become a substitute for the past relationship.

Resentful

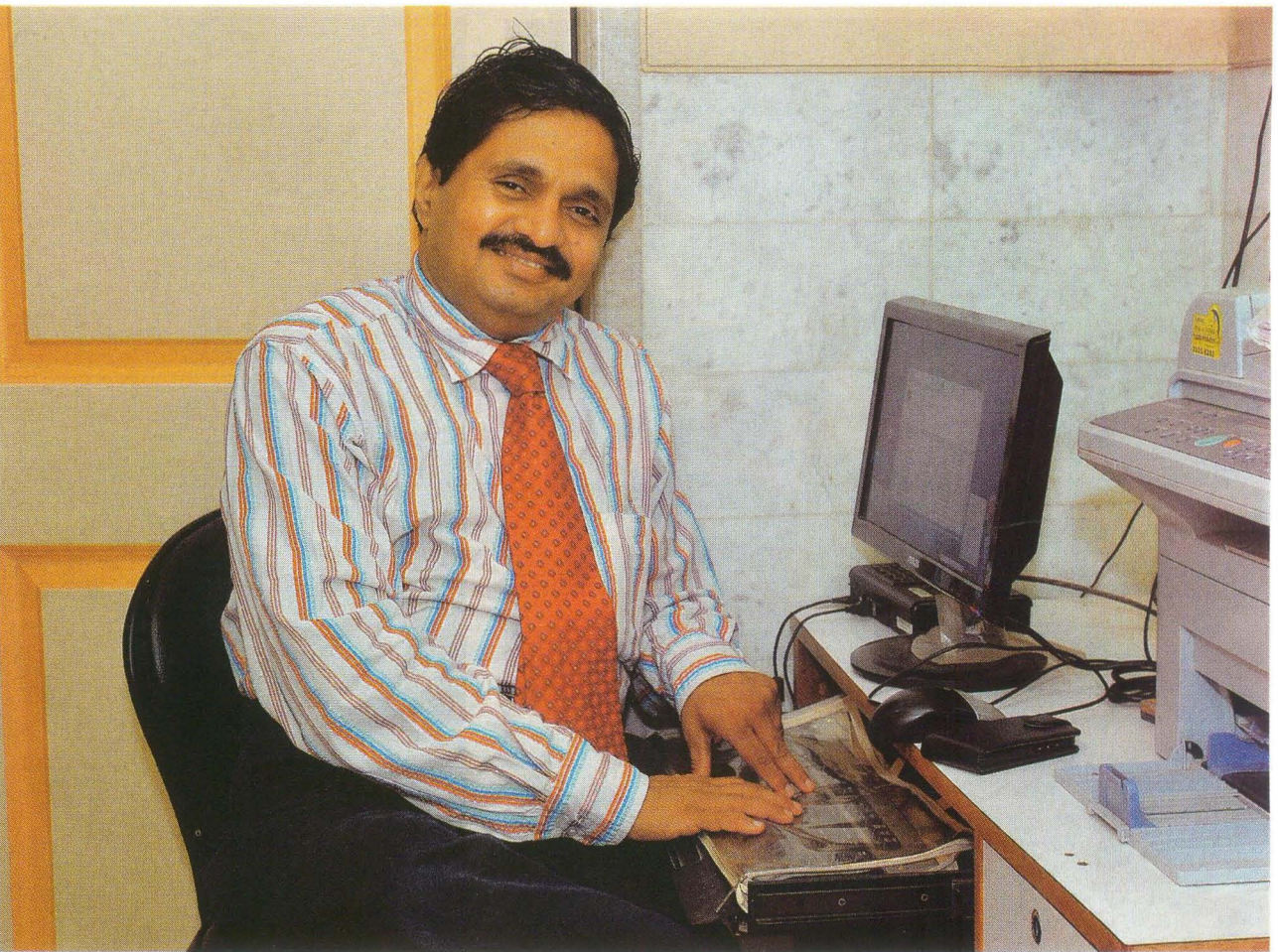
A stalker, sometimes suffering from paranoia, harasses victims with the intention of intimidating and causing fear. Target may be a lawyer, doctor or boss who is perceived to have let them down.

Incompetent suitor

Seeks a date, but without any grasp of social etiquette or understanding that the victim does not feel the same. A high proportion of offenders have learning disabilities.

Predatory

Offender follows victims with the intention of assaulting, raping or killing. Campaign can last for months, sustained by a feeling of power and control. The only group deemed automatically unsuitable for community treatment; they should be jailed.



of Beatles legend John Lennon, corroborates Shetty's explanation. During a parole hearing 20 years after he committed the crime, when Chapman was asked why he did it, he said: "The result would be that I would be famous, the result would be that my life would change and I would receive a tremendous amount of attention, which I did receive.... I was in a very confused, dark place. I was looking for reasons to vent all that anger and confusion and low self-esteem."

Chapman, reportedly, was a big fan of the Beatles, but got upset after Lennon made a comment that the Beatles was more famous than Jesus. He said J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* inspired him to shoot the singer. Back home, too, many stalkers have

Those who stalk typically have low self-esteem, suffer from depression or other mental illness. Efforts should be made to get the person to a counsellor.

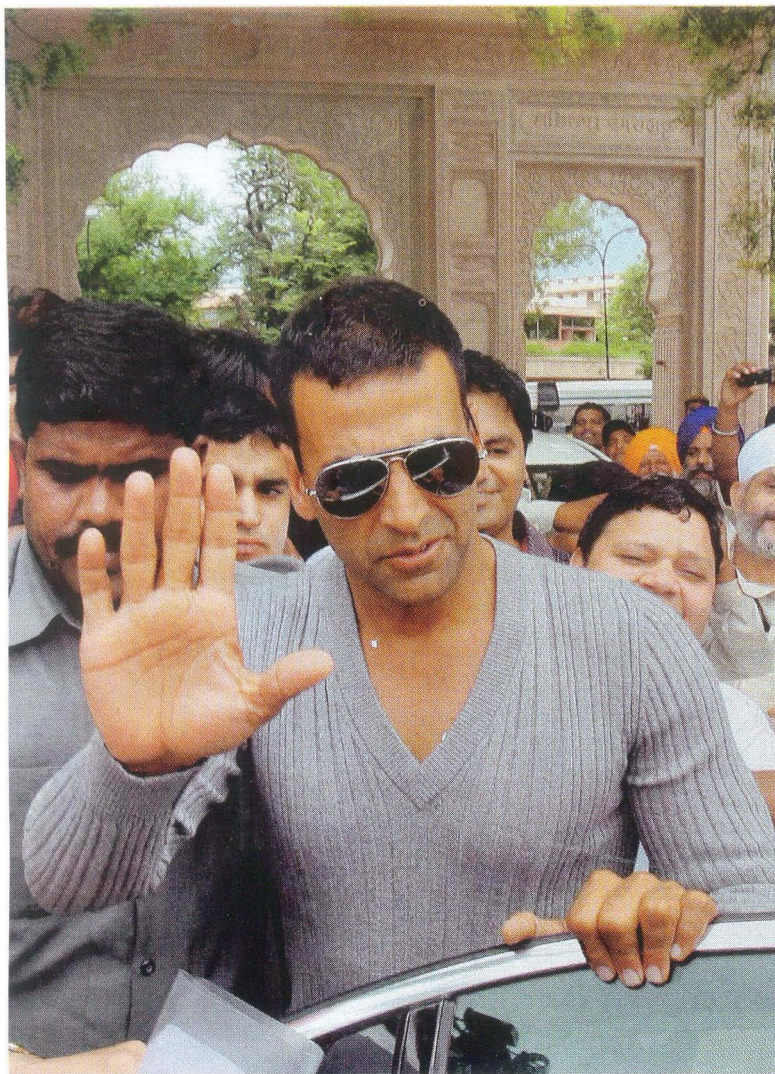
Dr Harish Shetty
Psychiatrist

confessed that they were inspired by films or books, in which the hero or heroine would pursue the person they desired for days and win their heart.

Shetty does not think popular cinema or literature can be blamed. "*Baazigar* was an example of a film which portrayed stalking," he says. "But I do not think films encourage stalking, though a 'stereotype' is propagated by them. Stalking is a pathological process

and is not an extension of chasing as shown in films."

Interestingly, stalking is not limited to celebrities. There are instances of people stalking their neighbours, colleagues and even teachers. Shetty shares a case he handled recently, where a student stalked his teacher. "He waited with flowers in the morning at the school gate and landed up near her house at night. The teacher was mortally scared," he says.



PTI

One of Akshay Kumar's fans used to wait in front of his house every day to meet him. When they met, she said she wanted to marry him. Despite Akshay saying that he was married, the girl refused to budge.

But psychological counselling does help and treating stalkers with sensitivity and empathy is the key to tackling the problem. During his parole trial Chapman said, "I feel that I see John Lennon now not as a celebrity. I did then. I saw him as a cardboard cutout on an

album cover. I was very young and stupid, and you get caught up in the media and the records and the music. And now I've come to grips with the fact that John Lennon was a person. This has nothing to do with being a Beatle or a celebrity or famous."



Calming the storm

A North London hospital is now home to the world's first clinic to treat stalkers

BY FAY SCHLESINGER

We all know the clichés: "It was love at first sight", "She's the one", "Tonight's the night", "The course of true love never did run smooth".

But what if these words were used to justify obsession, harassment or even murder? What if roses and a note reading "love at first sight" were left under your car windscreen wiper every day? Or if a neighbour texted "Night, night" every time you turned off the bedroom light for four years?

Even after your pursuer had been issued restraining orders, spent time in prison, lost his job and been disowned by his family, what if his explanation for ruining your life and his own was that "the course of true love never did run smooth"?

Through air-locked security doors and behind metal fences at a North London hospital, these are the questions that psychiatrists will attempt to answer at the world's first national clinic for the treatment of stalkers. Far from trying to keep stalkers locked up, it aims to rehabilitate them in the community as an alternative to short prison sentences, which are often handed down for crimes that are innocuous when taken in isolation, but life-destroying for victims.

A recent independent inquiry into stalking concluded that the

current legislation is "not fit for purpose". In England and Wales, for example, dealt under harassment laws, but the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group recommended a new and specific offence of stalking to give courts greater powers to improve a conviction rate of just 2 per cent.

The National Stalking Clinic aims to tackle a problem considered by the inquiry: that only 20 stalkers a year are jailed for more than 12 months, while others get short-term or community sentences. At the stalking clinic, up to 60 stalkers a year are expected to receive treatment for one or two hours a week as part of a potentially controversial scheme that tries to keep them out of prison to reduce reoffending and, ultimately, to save lives. A glance at the statistics makes it clear.

Stalking affects one woman in five and one man in ten in their lifetime, and it appears to be on the rise. Reasons for the increase range from celebrity fixations to the accessibility of information on the internet, and from social isolation to a growing culture of blame.

It is also a crime that can escalate into tragedy, though not normally at the hands of the stereotypical stranger-stalker. Of the 100 women killed each year by their exes in Britain, three-quarters were stalked by that partner in recent months.



STAR-STRUCK

A few celebrities who were stalked



Brad Pitt

Athena M. Rolando, an obsessed Brad fan, climbed through a window of the actor's house and was discovered by a caretaker. The 19-year-old woman, dressed in pyjamas and bunny slippers, carried a book on witchcraft along with a note to Brad and a large safety pin decorated with ribbons that she said was a doll she made for him. Athena was placed on probation for three years and underwent psychological counselling.

PHOTOS: AFP

Britney Spears

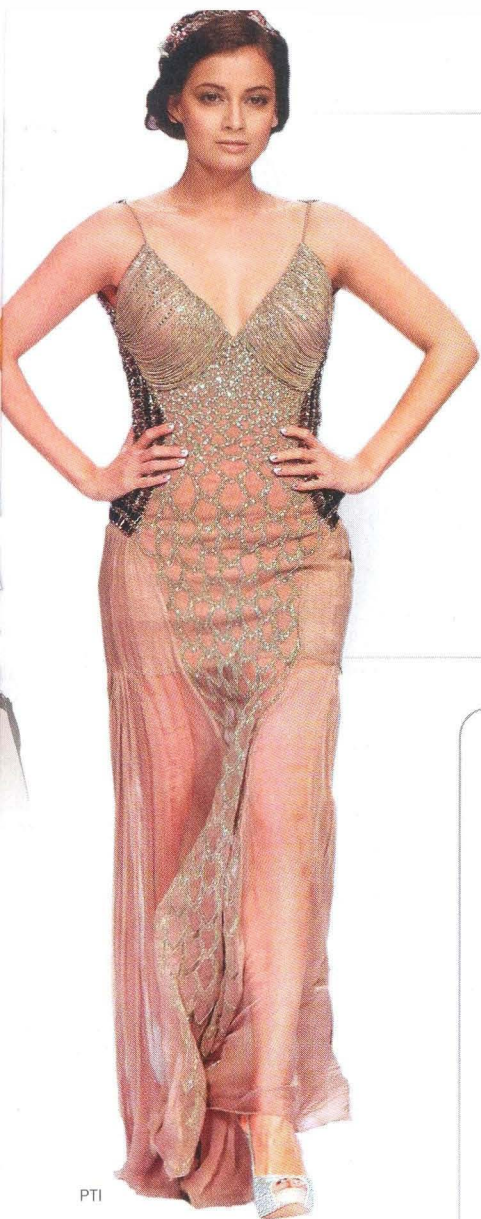
In 2003, the pop singer was stalked by Masahiko Shizawa, 41, who sent her hundreds of love letters and photos, and followed her. Shizawa, apparently, took an American tourist visa and went on a 37-city obsession tour in pursuit of Britney with just the internet as his guide.



Kangna Ranaut

Her stalker, Akash Bhardwaj, got passionate letters couriered to her continuously for six months. Akash visited the same gym as Kangna and the situation got out of hand when one of the trainers asked him why he was harassing the actor. He reportedly got violent and abused Kangna for not loving him. He had to be escorted out by the police.





PTI

Dia Mirza

The actor was greeted by a man on his knees with a bouquet and a ring proposing marriage to her outside her home. The 30-something stalker had been following Dia for six years before the incident. He managed to sneak past security disguised as a florist. Since the actor had received many bouquets on her birthday the day before, he had easy access to her home.

Vidya Balan

The actor had to call in the cops when a man in his late 20s managed to get into her Khar flat. Luckily, Vidya was not at home and the stalker went away only to come later. The stalker was, apparently, a permanent visitor to her sets after the success of *The Dirty Picture*. Though the cops arrested the stalker, no action was taken.



GRAPHICS: RAJESH A.S.

Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones

The actor couple took legal action against Dawnette Knight, a Michael fan who sent violent letters to Catherine. Dawnette said she was in love with Michael and would kill Catherine "and feed her to the dogs". The aspiring psychologist was charged with 25 counts of stalking and sentenced to three years in prison.

AP

We have cases of people harassing a victim on and off for 40 years. It becomes a person's job, it takes over their life.

Frank Farnham
Forensic psychiatrist

Targets can also include lawyers, doctors or company bosses who are blamed for a perceived wrong.

Frank Farnham, 47, is the forensic psychiatrist behind the National Stalking Clinic. Until now, says Farnham, stalkers have been treated in an ad hoc way, with therapy focused on issues such as drug and alcohol addiction or anger management, and carried out by practitioners who have no experience of stalking. "Nobody has, in a consistent way, analysed their underlying mental state, their motivation and the risk factors arising from those scenarios," he says.

Experts have divided stalkers into five groups, and their problems differ from those of other offenders. "The majority of stalkers are not mentally ill in terms of having a psychosis like schizophrenia or persistent delusional disorders," he says. "They have very odd personality structures: chronically jealous and a bit paranoid, but not in a psychotic sense—paranoid in the everyday sense of feeling that the world is against them. They have an overriding preoccupation, fuelled by anger or a sense of entitlement, which is so strong that they can't believe anybody could have left them. They are narcissistic. They might have a sense of grandiosity, anger and low self-esteem, which all go in the mix to create a perfect storm."

Psychotic stalkers may respond to medication, but others are harder to treat, especially if they are long-term perpetrators who feel they have invested much in pursuit of their target. "In absolute layman's terms," Farnham says, "one is mad mentally ill, the other is mad screwed-up".

The clinic's first objective is to become the UK's go-to centre for stalkers, who can be referred by the courts, police, probation service or National Health Service. Nearly 30 consultant psychologists and forensic psychiatrists at Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust have been trained to carry out assessments, which will cost the referral agency £1,500 to £2,000 per case. Where appropriate, they will recommend community sentences with compulsory rehabilitation programmes lasting, say, 12 or 18 months at a cost of £7,000 to £10,000. Farnham sets this against the £45,000 price tag of keeping someone in jail for a year.

But it is not merely a money game. The psychiatrist acknowledges the inevitable risk that a patient could go on to attack or kill his victim after the clinic has recommended a non-custodial sentence. However, he says, short prison terms often make the situation worse on release by removing stabilising factors in a stalker's life and introducing stress, which is a known trigger for harassment. Given the impossibility of locking away every stalker for life, rehabilitation is being promoted as a better option, subject to non-confidentiality clauses and stringent rules if a stalker breaches his conditions.

A gradual "chipping away" approach will be used during psychotherapy sessions, including cognitive behavioral therapy, anger management, deep relaxation and diaries of thought and actions. "Stalking is often based on a ker-

nel of truth," Farnham says, describing how the clinic has recently had a referral of a man who has pursued his victim for 12 years, on the basis of a three-week relationship. He's now coming to the conclusion that this isn't a good path to take.

"Most of us would say we've invested a lot emotionally in a relationship only if it had been going on for months or years. Some of these individuals will say that they lost their heart in two hours," he says. "We have cases of people harassing a victim on and off for 40 years. It becomes a person's job, it

takes over their life. If they weren't creepy already, they become so. People don't like to be around them and they lose normal social support that might keep somebody on an even keel."

In his 11 years with the trust, which cases stand out? "It's the situations where people have really lost control, have lost everything. I saw a man who had launched a slightly foolish business venture and the insurance company wouldn't pay out. It wasn't an awful lot of money, but he launched a vendetta against the CEO for 20 years. His wife left him, his kids





IN TWILIGHT ZONE: Fans surround Robert Pattinson's figurine at Madame Tussaud's

AFP

Reasons for increase in stalking range from celebrity fixations to the accessibility of information on the internet, and from social isolation to a growing culture of blame.

I think it can. With early intervention, who knows what you will prevent. By having a world-class clinic, it shows we are starting as a society to take this seriously."

The new clinic was inspired by a similar regional programme in Melbourne, Australia, set up by Professor Paul Mullen, whom Farnham describes as an "old-fashioned left-wing liberal psychiatrist from the sixties". Australia and now the UK are seen as world leaders on stalking, while other countries do not even have a word for the crime. The closest verb in French means, to harass.

"These are not just romantic men who are persistently soppy; this isn't just a rom-com gone wrong," Farnham says, who keeps his picture out of the press because of the risks posed by disgruntled stalkers. "Stalkers cross a line and victims are terrified. People live in this state of hyper arousal, constantly frightened about what will be around the next corner. It's psychological terrorism. We don't have to cure everybody, but if we can consistently intervene at an early stage, we can affect behaviour and over a population we are going to have a significant effect." ●

wouldn't have anything to do with him, he committed suicide. You just see the wasted lives and those of the victims. No one wins."

Does so much focus on the stalker's own wellbeing and quality of life leave a bad taste in the mouths of former victims, who might prefer their shadow to be locked up so that they can feel totally safe? "To an extent, yes," says Alexis Bowater, chief executive of the Network for Surviving Stalking. "Stalking steals the lives of victims and can lead to rape and murder, so you are going to go a long way to protecting vic-

tims from the consequences."

The 42-year-old Bowater was working as an ITV news anchor in the West Country when she was stalked by a supermarket worker in his twenties who sent more than 80 obscene and threatening emails over two years, including threats to kill her and her unborn child. He was jailed for four years in 2009.

Says Bowater: "So often, people are getting very short prison sentences or no sentence at all. Stalkers are recidivists who get a kick out of abusing the system. They don't stop until they are stopped. I hope the clinic will save lives, and

BODYSCAPE

Not so smooth

The term hiccup/hiccough is derived from the sound of the event, the characteristic hic. Hiccups are involuntary contractions of diaphragm—the structure that separates the thoracic cavity from the abdomen. Brief episodes of hiccups can occur regularly and are self-limiting. Prolonged attacks, however, are more serious and may be a sign of an underlying medical condition. Hiccups that last more than 48 hours are considered persistent/protracted while hiccups lasting more than a month are termed intractable.

The medical term for hiccup is singultus, from the Latin word singult, denoting the act of holding one's breath while sobbing.

TEXT BY AJISH P. JOY & GRAPHICS BY N.V. JOSE

Causes (of brief episodes)

- Gastric swelling due to food, alcohol, air
- Overconsumption of carbonated beverages
- Sudden changes in ambient/gastric temperature
- Sudden excitement/stress

Causes (of persistent/intractable hiccups)

i) Psychogenic factors

Shock, hysteria, fear
 Personality disorders
 Malingering (exaggerate or feign illness in order to escape duty or work)

ii) Central nervous system disorders

Congenital malformations
 Malignancies
 Multiple sclerosis
 Meningitis
 Encephalitis
 Infections

iii) Nerve damage/irritation

Damage or irritation to phrenic (nerve originating at neck, going into diaphragm) and vagus nerves (largest cranial nerve) are leading causes of hiccups. This can result from:

Hiatal hernia
 Heart attack
 Pericarditis (inflammation of tissues surrounding the heart)
 Subphrenic abscess (accumulation of infected fluid between diaphragm, liver and spleen)

Pleurisy (infection of the lining of lungs and chest)
 Pneumonia
 Glaucoma
 Foreign body/hair touching eardrum
 Pharyngitis
 Laryngitis
 Gastroesophageal reflux disease
 Peptic ulcer
 Tumours
 Pancreatitis
 Appendicitis

iv) Metabolic factors

Hyponatremia (low levels of sodium)
 Hypokalemia (low levels of potassium)
 Hypocalcemia (low levels of calcium)
 Hypoglycemia (low levels of sugar)
 Hypocarbica (low levels of carbon dioxide)
 Uremia (kidney disorder)

v) Drugs like benzodiazepines and barbiturates

vi) Hyper-extension of neck

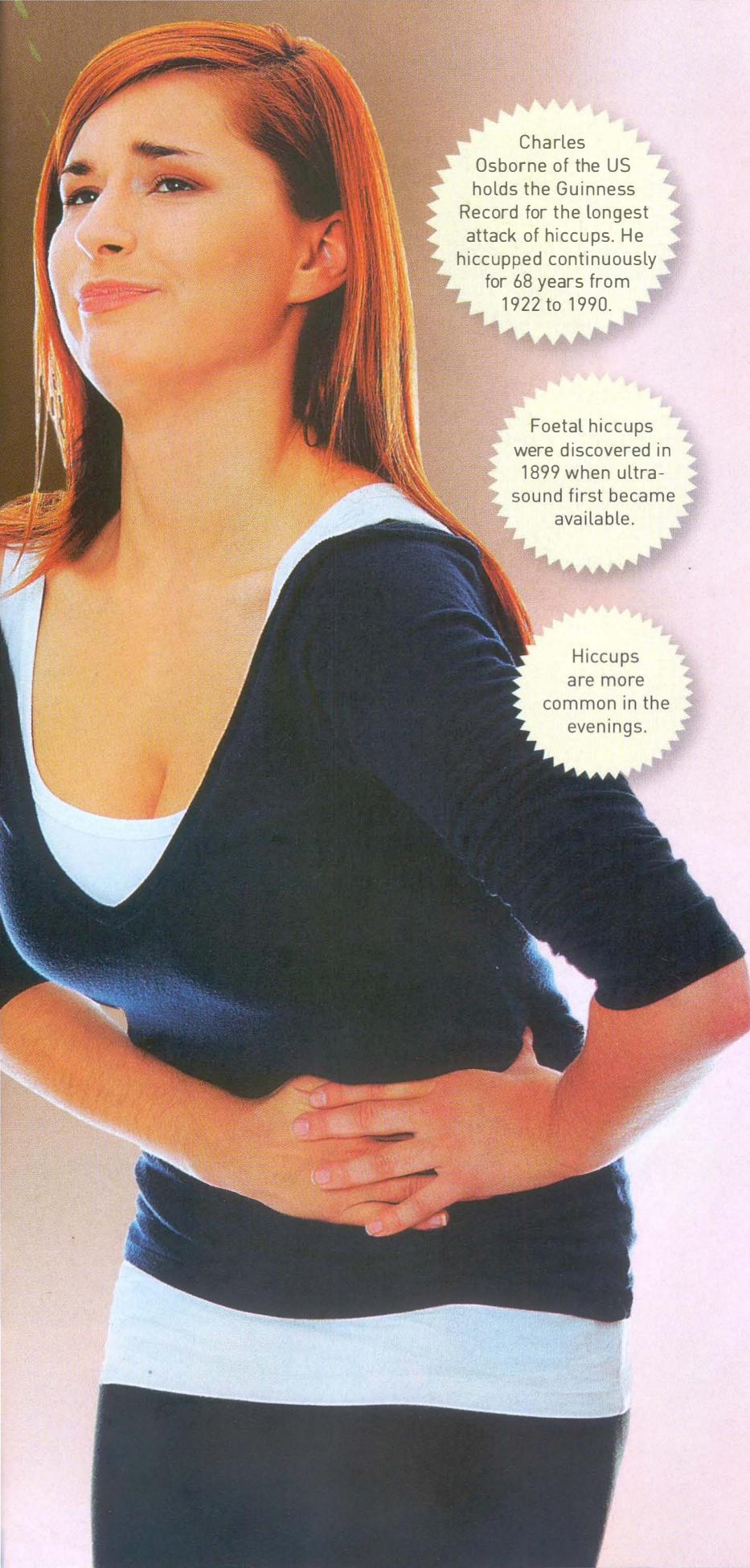
vii) Manipulation of diaphragm/stomach

viii) Ingestion of caustic agents

Did you know

Overall incidence is equal in men and women. Protracted and intractable hiccups are more prevalent among men.

Hiccups can occur at any age and also in utero.



Charles Osborne of the US holds the Guinness Record for the longest attack of hiccups. He hiccupped continuously for 68 years from 1922 to 1990.

Foetal hiccups were discovered in 1899 when ultrasound first became available.

Hiccups are more common in the evenings.

Home remedies

- Swallowing sugar
- Sipping ice-cold water
- Holding breath
- Breathing repeatedly into a paper bag
- Forcible traction of tongue
- Pulling knees up to chest and leaning forward

Treatment

- Direct pharyngeal stimulation by nasal or oral catheterisation
- Uvular stimulation by spoon/cotton tip applicator
- Removal of gastric content by vomiting, nasogastric tube
- Iced gastric lavage (stomach pumping)
- Valsalva manoeuvre (forcible exhalation while keeping mouth and nose shut)
- Carotid sinus massage
- Hypnosis
- Mental distraction
- Acupuncture

Medical management

Certain anti-psychotic, anti-emetic, anti-epileptic and anti-arrhythmic drugs are used to treat hiccups. Centrally acting muscle relaxants and anaesthetics may also be administered. Other treatments include phrenic nerve block and surgical implantation of a battery-operated device to deliver mild electrical stimulation to vagus nerve

Prevention

- Avoid large meals
- Avoid/reduce food that is too hot and spicy
- Avoid sudden changes in temperature
- Avoid/reduce alcohol and carbonated beverages

Q & a



MEETA LALL

Nutrition expert, New Delhi
Log in to www.the-week.com
and click on ASK EXPERT to
post your queries online.

ASK EXPERT: NUTRITION

Renu: I am 60 years old. Recently, after a spinal surgery, I was diagnosed with a condition called the cauda equina syndrome, due to which I have a constant feeling of constipation and inadequate evacuation. Since diet has a lot to do with bowel movement, I would like to seek your advice.

You are right. A proper fibre-rich diet can truly alleviate constipation. Do not use laxatives, since using them to relieve constipation makes the bowels dependent upon them. The key to relieving constipation lies in eating high-fibre food. A high-fibre diet causes a large, soft, bulky stool that passes through the bowel more easily and quickly. Fibre, or roughage, is that part of a plant that cannot be digested by the body. Experts recommend a daily intake of 25-30gm of fibre in the diet to prevent and ease constipation. This can be easily achieved by eating a balanced diet containing the following fibre-rich food items. Whole grains—wheat bran is largely fibre. Go for whole wheat products instead of refined flour (maida). Avoid white bread, biscuits, pasta, noodles and naan/bhatura. Use brown rice instead of white rice. Brown bread with added fibre is good. Cornflakes and rice flakes are pretty low in fibre—opt for dalia, oatmeal or cereals fortified with bran. Pulses: especially the ones with husk are great sources of fibre.

Make sure you eat at least two servings of dal every day. One serving in lunch and the other can be eaten as sprouts.

Fruits and vegetables: eat at least two servings of fruits and three-four servings of vegetables every day.

Fruits such as apples, bananas, guavas, oranges, pears and pomegranates are rich in fibre. Avoid fruit juice—eat the whole fruit with skin and pulp. Figs, raisins, prunes and raspberries have the highest fibre content.

Green leafy vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, methi are rich in fibre. Other vegetables such as beans, broccoli, peas, turnips, carrots, potatoes (with skin) are all excellent sources. To increase your fruit intake, add dried fruit to porridge,



cereal or milk puddings; slice a banana on your breakfast cereal; or go in for fruit-based desserts to *mithai*, cakes and ice creams. Eat slowly and chew food thoroughly to allow the digestive system to work well. Eat meals at regular intervals. You may also like to add some bulk-forming natural laxatives which are available commercially. Or simply buy flax seeds: add two tablespoons of freshly-ground flax to yoghurt, cereal, sauces or anything that you choose.

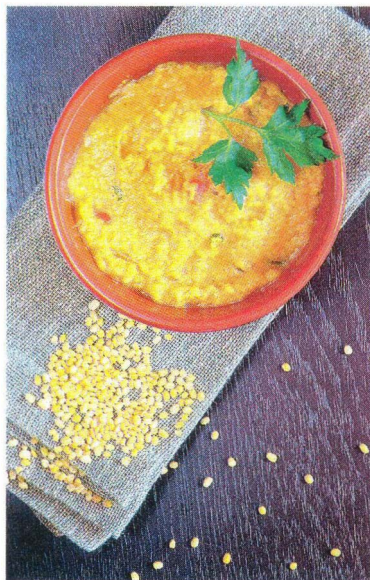
Drink at least eight to 10 glasses of water a day. In addition, warm lemon water and vegetable juice are good. Take up some regular exercise such as walking or jogging. Exercise shakes up the bowels, reduces the transit time of stools through the long intestine and ensures that it is softer by the time it reaches your rectum. Don't ignore the call to pass stools. Don't be embarrassed to leave the table or keep people waiting. At the same time, add one probiotic to your food intake every day—these promote friendly gut bacteria to thrive in our intestine—this in turn promotes digestion and prevents constipation. Probiotics are abundant in traditional food like curd. Eaten plain or as raita, lassi, chaach, srikhand or in chutneys, a daily dose of curd is a must for a healthy gut. One medium *katori* (or about 200 ml) curd is sufficient every day.

ASK EXPERT: NUTRITION

If processed food and sugar are pesticides for gut health, fermented food items are natural fertilisers. Dhokla, dosa, idli and uttappam possess probiotic properties. Other Asian food items like miso, kimchee, tempeh, kefir, olives, sauerkraut and pickled vegetables are all loaded with healthy bacteria. Cheese, fermented fish and alcoholic beverages are also good. A number of supplements rich in probiotics are available in the market. These supplements contain billions of live micro-organisms which correct the good to bad bacteria balance in the intestine right away. Experts recommend a regular intake of commercially available probiotics for everyone in the family—be it children, adults, pregnant women and nursing mothers.

Avni: I am 15 years old and weigh 53kg. My BMI is all right but I want to shed the excess fat on my tummy and waistline. I would also like to add on some height, which is 5'2".

You are only 15 and are reasonably tall. Remember, you will continue to put on height though very slowly, over the next five years. Your body fat distribution will also continue to change so don't worry. But yes, you should start exercising so that fat does not start depositing on your tummy. Also, never, never miss a meal. Do not rush from home in the morning without breakfast—even if it is a glass of cold milk, a toast and a fruit. Carry a healthy homemade tiffin to school/college (even if you don't agree with the idea at all); otherwise, you will end up eating whatever is available in the canteen—



greasy burgers, noodles, patties. Eat healthy food at all times. Each of your meals should be a combination of cereals, pulses/meat, milk/curd with liberal amounts of fruits and vegetables. Since you have a hectic schedule, ask your mom to give you foods which can be eaten on the go such as sandwich layered with mushroom/chicken filling; rolls containing kebabs and vegetables. Limit the number of choices at a meal. More the food choices, the more we tend to eat. Before serving a second portion, wait a few minutes. You don't always have to finish the food on your plate. Instead, listen to your internal cues of satiety and hunger. Do not keep food as a reward. Do not say, "I was very good today, I now deserve a pizza." Do not keep eating all day—frequent snacking on chips, namkeen, burgers, chocolates, cola, is what makes us fat. Instead, have three main meals and two small snacks in between.

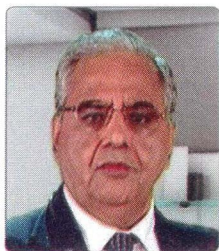
Healthy snacks include parantha rolls, layered crackers, nut brittle, yoghurt, fresh fruit, roasted chanas. Do not eat in front of the TV—you will be surprised how much extra food we put in. Do not give up your favourite food totally. Instead, opt for half and later, quarter portions. Total deprivation only makes our favourite food more attractive. Restrict intake of deep-fried food and namkeen, chips and popcorn, red meat, whole milk and paneer/cheese/curd, packaged baked goods, potato chips, nachos. Allow yourself a treat of these only once or twice a week.

Cut back on the high calorie-low nutrient 'white food'—pasta, rice, potatoes, white breads, breakfast cereals and corn. Candy, cakes and chocolates are okay once in a while. Limit fast food to once a fortnight or even less. Fast food provides large amounts of fat and simple carbohydrates but are low in iron, calcium, riboflavin, folic acid, vitamins A and C.

Drink lots of fluids (preferably water) during the day. But avoid cold drinks. Soft drinks usually substitute milk thereby lowering calcium intake. This can increase the risk of broken bones.

Ask your physician about supplements, especially calcium and iron supplements. Besides healthy eating, physical activity is particularly important at your age. Experts recommend that all adolescents should participate in moderate physical activity (15 minutes of running or 30-40 minutes of brisk walking or 45 minutes of playing volleyball) on most, if not all, days of the week. ●

ASKEXPERT: DIABETES



Dr. Ashok Jhingan,
Chairman, Delhi Diabetes Research
Center (DDRC)

Sharan Shetty: I am diabetic since last 10 months and taking tablets for this. My doctor wants me to continue medicines, although my sugar level is controlled. I am not sure whether I should continue medicines or should I stop them as the medicine causes flatulence and stomach upset which is very embarrassing?

Diabetes is characterized by high blood sugar level in the body which is caused by lack of insulin. To live a healthy and normal life, it is required that people with diabetes maintain blood sugar levels to near normal range. For this balanced diet, regular exercise, proper medication and monitoring all are required. These are like the four legs of a table- all are essential to control blood sugar levels. So, do not stop your medicine as this will cause your blood sugar levels to rise again. Visit your doctor again and he can change your medication to some other class which may be able to help you without these side effects. With the help of your doctor, you can surely live a comfortable life.

S.Q: I am 53 and have diabetes for around eight years. My eye feels dry and itchy all the time. I thought this is because I am allergic to pollens. But recently I read that this can be caused by diabetes. Should I go to an eye doctor or the doctor who treats me for diabetes? What do you suggest?

As far as I have read your details it could be due to any of the above reasons. You should visit your eye doctor as well as diabetes doctor.

Constantly elevated blood glucose levels can affect the eyes and vision in a number of ways. There are none or vague symptoms in the earlier stages of the disease; so please go for annual

vision tests, eye pressure test and eye fundus examination. Early detection of eye problems and good control of diabetes (HbA_{1c} less than 7%) goes a long way toward preventing diabetes complications and ensuring a healthy life for people with diabetes.

Meera Reddy: Recently I was diagnosed with diabetes. Everyone I meet tells me to avoid rice and have wheat chapatti. I am used to eating rice at least once a day. Is it not possible to eat rice and also control diabetes?

It is a common misconception that people with diabetes cannot eat rice. This is not true. Both wheat and rice have almost same calories and same effect on blood sugar. One needs to focus on quantity and the advantage with a wheat flour chapatti is that it is more convenient to measure than rice.

Rice can be exchanged with other food items in grain/starch list. 1 starch exchange (serving) contain approximately: 15 grams carbohydrate, 3 grams protein, trace fat, and approximate 80 calories. Rice, (cooked) 1/3 cup = Plain Wheat roti 1 (6 inch) = Bread (1 slice)

It is preferred to have whole wheat flour rather than Maida, and brown rice instead of white rice. The health benefits of brown rice are its high fiber content and nutrients like vitamin B1, magnesium and selenium. Brown rice also has low glycemic index which leads to steady rise rather than steep rise in blood sugar levels. So, have grains (wheat/rice) with lots of vegetables (fiber). Along with proper diet, regular exercise, medicine and monitoring are essential for good control of diabetes.

S.Singh: I am a 40 year mother of a teenager. I was diagnosed with diabetes three months ago. I weigh 103 Kg. My doctor says that I should lose weight. I want to lose weight, but I cannot diet, I feel hungry all the time. Is there any medicine which can help me?

Dieting and following a starvation diet is not the right way of losing weight, and is not advisable. Following tips can help you in your weight loss.

- Do not starve. When you skip meals, hunger can force you to eat more and the wrong foods at your next meal. Having 6 small meals is better than 2-3 meals per day. This will also steady your metabolism.

- Eat wisely. Eat fruits, vegetables and whole grains instead of junk food. Avoid oily and fried things.
- Try to reduce your portion sizes and substitute high-calorie foods with low calorie options.
- Be physically active in all the ways you can. Join some exercise program, dance class or do house hold chores. Do something which you like and do it regularly.

For your diabetes considering your details GLP-1 based therapy, a new class of treatment may be useful. GLP-1 is a natural hormone which helps in controlling diabetes and also in reducing weight. It produces a feeling of fullness that often leads to significant weight loss. Visit your doctor ask for his opinion as no medicine should be taken without doctor's prescription. Also remember, no medication can substitute the role of healthy diet and regular exercise.

G. Subramaniam: I am 68 and have diabetes since 1999. In Feb 2011 I was put on insulin by my doctor. My diabetes was controlled till last month. Last month, I started having a tooth problem, because of which I am eating very less, but my sugar level has become very high. My dentist says that I need to bring diabetes under control before any dental surgery. I cannot understand why my sugars are high when I am eating so less. Please advice.

Any type of illness, infection, surgery, dental problem or injury can cause stress on your body. To "fight" this stress, body needs more energy and for that it releases hormones (they're called "counter-regulatory hormones"). These hormones lead to release of extra glucose from liver to provide you with the energy. These hormones also inhibit the effect of insulin which means you become insulin resistant. As a result, blood glucose rises. Whenever there are constantly high blood sugar levels, it adds to the infection, delays healing and the vicious cycle continues. Depending on the extent of the infection, your blood glucose might be more difficult to control for a while. Visit your diabetologist and get your insulin dose adjusted. Once your tooth infection is treated or becomes less virulent, your doctor may put you back on your previous dose of insulin.

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Stimulus to soothe

DBS is new hope for patients with uncontrolled seizures

BY GUNJAN SHARMA

A frail, anorexic woman with grey hair opens the door of the spacious bungalow in Faridabad. We are there to meet Shalini Arora, the first epilepsy patient in Asia to have a pacemaker implanted in the brain, and are surprised to know that it is Shalini herself who greeted us at the entrance. The 33-year-old looks much older than her age, though.

Shalini was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was 18 months old. Her parents did not take it too seriously for the first 10 years, as she didn't display symptoms that required medication. An average student at school, she was a quiet girl.

The attacks came after she failed in class 12 exams. The failure was so stressful that she couldn't sleep for three consecutive nights. The fourth day, Shalini suffered an epilepsy attack.

The attacks were severe and returned every three to four days. She had to give up studies. It aggravated her psychological problems: she started feeling inferior to her siblings, and the intensity and frequency of her attacks increased. To up her self-esteem, her father enrolled her in a distance education programme for a bachelor's degree.

Meanwhile, her condition worsened and medicines were of no help in controlling her

epilepsy. She was confined to bed and most doctors advised surgery as her only hope.

"Surgery, doctors told us, had less than 20 per cent chance of being successful in her case. Also because it was an open brain surgery, we were in a dilemma," says Har Dayal Arora, her father.

Shalini and her parents decided to take the plunge after meeting Dr Alok Gupta, head of neurosurgery at Artemis Health Institute in Gurgaon.

Gupta was familiar with Shalini's case since her childhood. Having successfully used deep brain stimulation (DBS) in treating other neurological conditions such as Parkinson's disease and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, he recommended DBS for Shalini.

"In DBS therapy, controlled electrical pulses are supplied to a target in the brain, called the anterior nucleus of the thalamus, which is a part of the circuit involved in seizures. The therapy has converted about 70 per cent of uncontrolled epilepsy cases to controlled ep-

30% of all the patients who have undergone DBS therapy have become seizure-free.

What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a set of chronic neurological disorders that are characterised by seizures from abnormal neuronal activity in the brain.

Currently available treatment

Epilepsy is usually controlled, but not cured, with anticonvulsant medication. If a person's epilepsy cannot be brought under control after adequate trials of two or three different drugs, it is said to be medically refractory or uncontrolled epilepsy. Surgery is an option for such patients. Traditional surgical procedures restrict seizures to the focal point and prevent them from spreading to the entire brain. Surgical procedures include:

Callosotomy: Severs the corpus callosum that connects the two

hemispheres of the brain.

Multiple subpial transection: Involves shallow cuts to the cerebral cortex to interrupt brain fibres.

Hemispherectomy: Newer surgical therapy, where one cerebral hemisphere of the brain is removed or disabled.

These procedures are highly risky, as side-effects can range from memory loss to even complete paralysis, and so are usually reserved for patients who have exhausted all other treatment options.

DBS and epilepsy

Deep brain stimulation (DBS) is an experimental neuron-stimulation therapy where electric current is used to stimulate areas in the brain.

How it works

Under local anaesthesia, electrodes are inserted bilaterally into targeted areas of the brain. In epilepsy, the electrode target is the anterior nucleus of the thalamus. It also includes a pulse generator, similar to a heart pacemaker, which is implanted under the skin in the chest allowing continuous supply of electric current. The implanted electrode stimulates specific

structures deep in the brain.

Advantages

DBS, unlike traditional surgery, is reversible and adjustable. No brain tissue is destroyed and the stimulator can be adjusted to achieve the best outcome. It can also be turned off or removed if adverse side effects occur.

Disadvantages

DBS is highly invasive as electrodes are placed directly in the brain. The most important risk is a chance of bleeding in the brain.



ARVIND JAIN

FREEDOM AT LAST

Shalini Arora, 33, was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was 18 months old.

The condition forced her to give up studies and she became confined to bed in her prime. Eight months after undergoing DBS therapy, now she is seizure-free.

ilepsy, and 30 per cent of all the patients have become seizure-free,” says Gupta. DBS therapy for epilepsy received the CE Mark approval in 2010 following a study conducted on 110 patients at 17 centres in the US.

Though the therapy has, reportedly, helped thousands of patients in Europe and America, doctors in India were sceptical about it. It took Gupta a long time to convince his colleagues to try the therapy on Shalini.

For Shalini and her family, this was their last chance. And since nothing seemed to be working in their favour, they decided to take the risk.

Eight months on, Shalini is now seizure-free. Happy with the treatment, she wants to start a new life. She has a wish list, which includes a master's in English from Delhi University and putting on some weight.

According to the World Health Organisation, if epilepsy cannot be controlled with the help of three anti-epilepsy medi-

cines, it is declared uncontrollable. These patients are left with no option but to undergo a brain bypass surgery, which has only about 50 per cent chances of success. Besides, it just converts an uncontrollable epilepsy into a controlled one.

DBS for epilepsy is still in the experimental stage. “It is a new therapy and doesn't have a long follow-up record,” says Gupta, “but we believe that it is a new ray of hope for patients with severe epilepsy.” ●

Dr John Chapman, president of European Atherosclerosis Society

The good, the bad, the ugly

BY SWAGATA YADAVAR

It is believed that high levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol is harmful for heart and that we need high levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or good cholesterol. A recent study in *The Lancet* showed that high levels of HDL alone does not protect the heart. Dr John Chapman, president of European Atherosclerosis Society, talks about how dyslipidemia or abnormal lipid levels are the biggest risk factors for the heart. Excerpts from an interview:

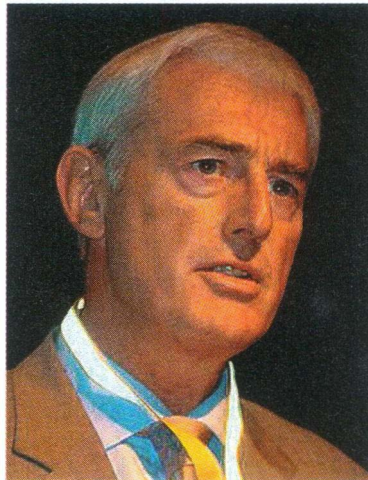
What are the new findings on dyslipidemia?

In the past five years we have realised that in cardio-metabolic disease, the function of HDL in protecting the arterial wall is affected. So we are trying to develop drugs which will raise HDL and also improve its protective functions.

We are now trying to make the levels of LDL and HDL similar, because that is how it is when we are born. As adults we have five times more LDL cholesterol. Also, new drugs, particularly antibodies, are being developed to lower LDL.

The Lancet study states that HDL does not seem to protect against heart disease.

It is a provocative study and will lead to further research. We still need to learn a lot about HDL which is many times more complex than LDL. While there is one protein in LDL, there are over hundred proteins and over 300 lipids



in HDL. These new developments are especially important for India, because you seem to have a high frequency of both the particle and low HDL.

What are the most common risk factors for heart disease?

A study called Inter Heart by Salim Yusuf, published in Canada eight years ago, with a survey of more than 52 countries showed that there were nine main risk factors for heart disease. These were dyslipidemia (high levels of LDL and low levels of HDL), smoking, diabetes, hypertension, sedentary lifestyle, obesity, insufficient consumption of vegetables and fruits, alcohol consumption and psycho social stress. The factor with more than 50 per cent risk is dyslipidemia.

Low levels of HDL is genetic and the difficulty is that there are as many as 50 genes. Another point is if we take a high carbohydrate diet as many Indians do, this alters the

metabolism of HDL. When triglyceride levels are driven by smoking, obesity or carbohydrate rich diet, the HDL is broken by kidney and its level falls. This is why a balanced diet is so important. We must not consume extra calories. For many of us eat too many calories and do not involve in many activities.

What are the new findings that change the way we look at heart?

One of the main changes, particularly in the US, the UK also in Germany is when the clinician prescribes the drug, he must obtain the therapeutic target set. In other words, it must be

Another new concept is lifetime risk published in the *New England Journal*. It says every year of your life you accumulate risk. So if you have high cholesterol and high blood pressure at age 15 and if it is not corrected, your arteries integrate the effect till you are treated.

How do we identify high-risk younger patients?

The only way to do this is by making families aware that if they have a family history of heart disease, they have to be screened. The challenge is that you have a huge population. So education through magazines and newspapers is very important.

How is diabetes related to heart disease?

WHO has predicted that there will be 100 million diabetics in India by 2025. Diabetes involves a dramatic increase in risk for cardiovascular disease and atherosclerosis. It does not just affect the artery but also the eyes, nerves and the kidneys. However, we now know that almost 80 per cent of diabetics accumulate too much weight. If they lose weight, they can correct half the diabetes and would need less insulin.

So, having a correct weight needs a balanced diet, no smoking and exercise—even for 30 minutes a day helps. ●



treatments are very different.

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

NHL can be high grade or low grade and initially affects groups of lymph nodes in one area of the body and later the lymphoma cells can spread through the lymphatic system to lymph nodes in other parts of the body. The affected cells can also get into the bloodstream, which may carry them to other organs. When the lymphoma cells reach a new area they may form a new tumour. The common places for it to start are neck, axilla, chest, groin and the abdomen. It can also occur in the organs and some patients develop lymphoma in the spleen, liver, lungs or bone marrow.

Symptoms

The first sign of NHL is often the swelling of a lymph node. Other symptoms are night sweats or unexplained fever, loss of appetite, unexplained weight loss and excessive tiredness. Children may develop a cough or breathlessness and may also complain of abdominal pain, or you may notice a lump in your child's abdomen. If you or your child have any of these symptoms, it's important to have them checked. But remember, they are common to many conditions other than NHL. Most people with these symptoms will not have NHL. Lymphomas that start in another part of the body may have different symptoms. For example, if the lymphoma is in the abdomen you may have abdominal pain or indigestion.

Treatment

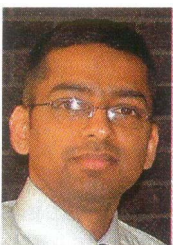
Initial treatment primarily involves chemotherapy, monoclonal antibody and radiotherapy.

Many people with NHL can either be cured or stay in remission for many years. Complete remission is where there is no sign of the lymphoma. Partial remission is where the lymphoma shrinks down so that the person is well,

Strike the right node

The lowdown on lymphoma, which is increasingly being reported in India

BY DR BALKRISHNA PADATE



Over the last couple of years, lymphoma has been increasingly reported in India. Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system, a network of conduits called lymphatic vessels and lymph nodes. Usually, cells in different parts of the body repair and repro-

duce in an orderly and controlled manner. However, sometimes for some reason the process gets out of control and the person develops cancer. If this happens to the cells of the lymphatic system, it is called lymphoma.

The two main types of lymphoma are Hodgkin's lymphoma and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL). It is important to differentiate between the two because the

does not have symptoms and does not require further treatment at that time.

Factors taken into consideration to decide treatment are:

- Specific type of lymphoma
- Age
- General health (including any other medical conditions)
- Parts of body affected
- Number of affected lymph nodes and whether other organs are affected

Low-grade lymphomas

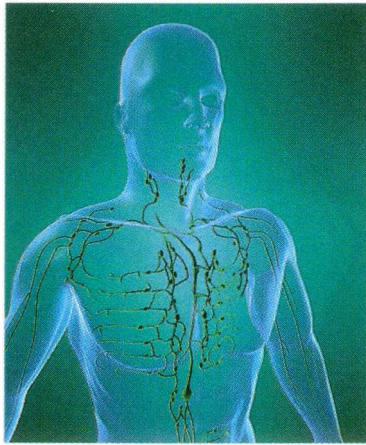
Low-grade lymphomas often grow very slowly and there may be long periods where there is very little, or no change in the disease. For many people, regular check-ups are all that is needed and treatment may be postponed for a long time, which is known as active surveillance.

Usually, the initial treatments are chemotherapy and monoclonal antibody. If you have low-grade NHL in only one group of lymph nodes, you may just be given radiotherapy to that area.

If the lymphoma comes back after treatment, it can be treated again with chemotherapy (with or without a monoclonal antibody), radiotherapy or with a monoclonal antibody alone. Often another period of remission may follow. Low-grade NHL can often be controlled in this way for many years. Rarely, patients are considered for bone marrow transplantation for cure.

High-grade lymphomas

These are faster growing and need treatment soon after the diagnosis. Treatment is usually with a combination of chemotherapy and monoclonal antibody. Chemotherapy can often shrink high-grade NHL quickly. If there is a high risk of the lymphoma coming back after standard treatment, other treatments such as high-dose chemotherapy and bone marrow transplantation are considered.



VITAL VESSELS: Lymphoma is the cancer of the lymphatic system

Sometimes radiotherapy is used after chemotherapy, especially if the lymphoma is in just one area of the body or was very large before chemotherapy was given.

Hodgkin's lymphoma

The first symptom of Hodgkin's lymphoma is usually a swelling in the neck, axilla or groin. The swellings are usually painless, but some may ache. Other symptoms may include drenching and/or frequent sweats especially at night, unexplained high body temperature, weight loss, tiredness and cough or breathlessness.

Treatment

The majority of people with Hodgkin's lymphoma can be cured with the current treatments, even when the lymphoma is in different areas of the body. The main types of treatment for Hodgkin's lymphoma are chemotherapy and radiotherapy. The treatment will be based on the results of the staging tests.

Other factors taken into account when planning the treatment include age, general health (including any other medical conditions), the specific type of Hodgkin's lymphoma, parts of your body affected, size of the affected lymph nodes and whether or not the lymphoma involves other organs, whether or not you have symptoms such as

high temperature, night sweats or weight loss and the results of the blood tests.

If Hodgkin's lymphoma doesn't respond well to standard chemotherapy, or comes back, high-dose chemotherapy with bone marrow transplantation may be used.

Benefits and disadvantages of treatment

Many people are concerned about the side effects of cancer treatment. Although treatments can cause side effects, the short-term side effects can usually be controlled with medicines.

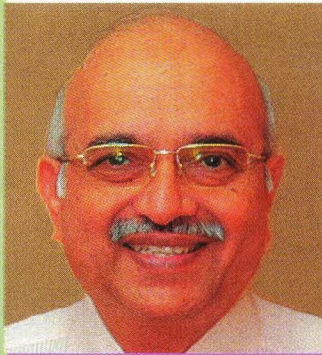
Treatment can be given for different reasons, and the benefits will vary for each person. Low-grade lymphoma is usually very sensitive to chemotherapy and radiotherapy and treatment can induce partial remission or complete remission. Many people with low-grade lymphoma can have the illness controlled for many years and can live an almost a normal life. Treatment can reduce symptoms and increase life expectancy in most patients.

Without treatment, high-grade NHL would usually spread quite quickly. Most of the side effects of treatment can be well controlled and the treatment is usually effective. A complete cure is possible for many people with high-grade NHL.

Sometimes lymphoma comes back after initial treatment. At this stage the decisions are made based on the patient's fitness. Curative options like bone marrow transplantation are offered to patients who are otherwise fit. Treatment that may only be able to control the disease and improve symptoms and quality of life is offered to patients who cannot tolerate more strong treatment.

Dr Balkrishna Padate, MBBS, MD (Med), MRCP (UK), FRCPath (UK), CCST (UK), is a consultant in haematology, haemato-oncology and bone marrow transplantation (BMT) at Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai.

Q & a



DR D. NARAYANA REDDY
MBBS, PhD, FIC, FACS, ACST

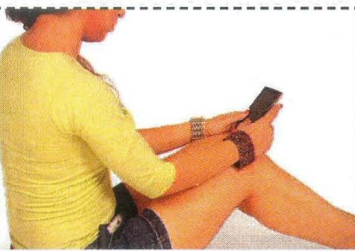
Sexologist, Chennai

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ASK EXPERT: SEXOLOGY



LH: I have recently discovered that my teenage daughter has been sexting and involved in phone sex. I'm really shocked. How can I convince her about its harm?

Probably these are new and exciting for your daughter. During teenage the interest in sexual matters will be high and the teenagers will be curious and want to do certain things. While I can understand your concern as a mother, do not make it a big issue. Play it cool. Understand that we may not be able to totally prevent this teenage behaviour. Be a friend to your daughter and discuss with her. Do not reprimand. Explain the pros and cons of her activities. If she understands that you are not against her but only concerned about her welfare, she may not cross the Lakshman rekha. Most probably this teenage fad may pass in due course. If need be take her to a competent sex counsellor.

Harry: I am 50 years old. I have not had sex with my wife for the past six years. In the morning I get an erection for a few moments. During erection, my penis has a downward curve. Why?

You may be suffering from a connective tissue disorder known as Peyronie's disease. This condition is also known as Induratio Penis Plastica and more recently, Chronic Inflammation of Tunica Albuginea.

This involves the growth of fibrous plaques in the soft tissue of the penis and affects 1-4 per cent of men. Specifically the process occurs in the tunica albuginea, a fibrous envelope surrounding the penile corpora cavernosa, causing an abnormal curvature of the penis. You need to consult a urologist.

Masha: I am 26 years old and my baby boy is one year old. My husband and I have already planned that we will have our second child only after three years. We haven't had full-fledged intercourse after my delivery.

My menstrual periods have resumed and my husband is not willing to take any precaution to avoid pregnancy; he completely avoids sex. What is the safe period?

The 'safe period' method is not that safe. This is based on the under-

standing of the woman's natural monthly cycle. The couple has sex during the least fertile or the safe days of the month. This means that intercourse must be avoided around the time of ovulation (when an egg is released from the ovary). Generally ovulation occurs around the fourteenth day of a normal and regular menstrual cycle. The greatest likelihood of getting pregnant is around this time.

Since the exact date of ovulation cannot be prejudged accurately, one week prior to and after the fourteenth day is avoided. The main problem in this method is to establish the time and date of ovulation. Many women may not have a perfect 28-day cycle and this affects the calculations.

Gambhir: I am 25. For the last five years, I have been masturbating at least once daily. I get good erection but after some time semen leaks out. At the time of orgasm there comes only a small amount of semen because of this problem.

It appears to me that you are continuing to stimulate your male organ even after ejaculation. That is why the quantity of semen is less when you stop masturbating. Also when you slow down the stimulation at the point of ejaculation and restart it later, some semen will seep out as you might have already reached the point of no return.



The better choice

Impotence can be managed with medical help, but an abusive marriage is irresolvable

Amir Khan's TV show *Satyamev Jayate* on domestic violence reminded me of a couple of my patients.

Two different people with two different issues. They had one common problem though, and that was marriage. One set of parents came with their daughter who was in an abusive marriage. She wanted to leave her marital home, but her parents wanted her to stay on. And the other set had come to know that their son-in-law was impotent. They wanted to annul the marriage and asked me to issue a certificate of virginity for their daughter as proof. This got me thinking. It looks like marriage boils down to two things—recreation (pleasure) and procreation.

Marriage is the only legal means to achieve these objectives. This

may be why parents make a hue and cry when the two objectives are not fulfilled. While these sentiments are understandable, this thinking has become obsolete. Today, with advancement in medical technology, impotence can be managed one way or the other (you can even grow a penis through stem cell technology). Similarly, assisted reproductive technologies, which include test tube babies, surrogate motherhood, cloning and stem cell applications are some channels available to beget a child.

Besides, in the present day urban system, youngsters either postpone their pregnancies or do away with pregnancies. For instance, the DINKs (Double Income No Kids) syndrome. With the emergence of modern lifestyles like BPOs, web

teaching and 24-hour call centres, couples hardly have time for sex, leave alone pregnancy or a child.

People should realise that it is better to have an impotent husband rather than an abusive one. In a marriage where the husband is impotent, a woman can still get her sexual pleasure by using mechanical gadgets like vibrators, clitoral devices and virtual sex. Impotence, too, can be successfully managed. Happiness and contentment will prevail because the husband is otherwise considerate.

In contrast, in an abusive marriage, even if the husband is a raging bull his abusive nature will make life traumatic for the wife. These abusive men have deep-rooted psychological problems and it is often very difficult to manage them. ●



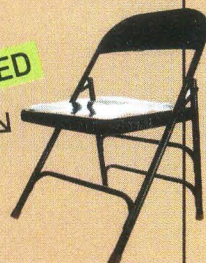
YogaMadeEasy

By DR S.N. OMKAR
yogaomkar@yahoo.Com

STRETCH AND TWIST

The muscles in the legs, thighs, hips, pelvis, lower back, upper back, neck, shoulders and the arms are all in a kinetic chain. Postures that can engage all these anatomical structures help a great deal in toning the entire body. Here is one such posture.

YOU NEED



Method:

1. Keep a chair in front and place a blanket on it.
2. Stand upright about 2ft from the chair.
3. Raise the right leg and rest it on top of the chair.
4. Stretch the right heel.
5. Pull both the knee caps and tighten the thigh muscles.
6. Stand upright, aligned with the centre of the chair.
7. Keep the right palm on the waist, stretch the left arm, twist the trunk and bend.
8. Hold the side of the chair with the left hand and grip the right shin with the left hand.
9. While maintaining the grip, twist and stretch the trunk.
10. Slowly raise the right arm.
11. Look up at the right palm.
12. As you exhale, slowly bend and twist towards the right knee.
13. Stay for about 30 seconds with slow deep breathing.
14. Slowly come up and relax.
15. Change side and repeat.

PHOTOS: BHANU PRAKASH CHANDRA
MODEL: MANASA UPADHYA

